

Scriptural Illiteracy

'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring Good News, who publish peace, who bring Good News of good things, who publish salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7). 'Who has believed our message? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' (Isaiah 53:1). 'Though Jesus did so many signs and miracles before them, they did not believe in Him. The word of Isaiah the prophet was fulfilled, "Lord, who has believed our message? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (John 12:37 & 38).

Abraham was a Hebrew (Genesis 14:13) a descendent of Eber (Luke 3:34 & 35) from where we get the word Hebrew, and their descendents were known throughout the whole Bible as Hebrews. God was known as 'Yahweh, God of the Hebrews' (Exodus 3:18). Abraham's descendents through his grandson Jacob (later renamed Israel, Genesis 35:10) were called the children of Israel (Genesis 46:8). One of Jacob's sons was named Judah (Genesis 29:35) from where the name Jew is derived, so the Hebrews were also known as Jews (2 Kings 16:6) and later, the Jewish people (Acts 12:11). God's purpose of bringing forth the Hebrew nation was so they could tell the world about God and the only Hope of salvation (the Messiah) and they have done their job well because the whole world has been told about God. 'There is no speech nor language where their voice (the salvation message) is not heard. Their voice has gone out through the entire earth, their words to the end of the world' (Psalm 19:3 & 4). 'Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. How will people call on Him in Whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him Whom they have not heard? How will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Good News of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" They did not all listen to the glad news (the Gospel). Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Did they not hear? Yes, most certainly, "Their voice went out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world" (Romans 10:13 to 18). 'We have many words to say about Jesus and the words are hard to interpret, seeing you have become dull of hearing (spiritually deaf). By this time you ought to be teachers but you again need to have someone teach you the basics of the first principles of the oracles of God' (Hebrews 5:11 & 12). 'Behold, a great multitude of people which no man could count, out of every nation, of all tribes, peoples and languages, standing before the (Great White) throne and before the Lamb of God, dressed in white robes with palm branches in their hands' (Revelation 7:9). According to the above verses, every generation and every language throughout history has heard the words of God one way or another, so mankind has no excuse for their sin. They have all heard but did not all listen and believe. 'If I had not spoken to them, they would not have had sin but now they have no excuse for their sin' (John 15:22).

Many people do not understand there is a lot more to walking with God than warming a seat in church and dropping a small coin into a bag once each week. Not so long ago, almost everyone attended church. Young people respected their elders. Children were rarely rude to adults. Parents raised their children with Godly principles, manners and ethics. Not many people divorced so children were not scarred from suffering through broken marriages and family hostility. Children knew who their father was. When people went out they were well dressed and had self-respect. Life is different now. In our day, it is considered normal for children and teenagers to be rude, unruly, scruffy and arrogant. Divorce and sexual sin is far too common. Many children have no idea who their father is. The reason for the breakdown in society is Scriptural illiteracy. Children are not taught the ways of the Lord. God makes it very clear, He expects all parents to tell their children about walking in the Lord, the ways of God and the Scriptures. 'Make them (the Scriptures) known to your children and grand children. Assemble the people before Me. I will make them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth and so they may teach their children ... These words I command you today will be on your heart and in your soul. You will teach them diligently to your children and will talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up' (Deuteronomy 4:9 & 10; 6:6 & 7; 11:18 & 19). 'Hear My teaching My people. Turn your ears to the words of My mouth. I will open My mouth in a parable. I will utter hidden sayings of old we have heard and known as our forefathers have told us. We will not hide the teachings from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, His strength and His wondrous works He has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a teaching in Israel, which He commanded our forefathers so they should make them known to their children so the generation yet to come might know, even the children who will be born who will arise and tell their children so they might set their hope in God and not forget the works of God but keep His commandments' (Psalm 78:1 to 7). 'Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it' (Proverbs 22:6).

At school and at church, those adults in authority should teach the children the ways of God. Without God, all humanity is spiritually lost and without hope. We can see by the bad behaviour of some children, they have no knowledge of God and do not know what He expects of them. 'Even a child is known by his behaviour, whether or not his work is pure and right' (Proverbs 20:11). Those traits continue within the child and as they

grow, the bad behaviour increases and is passed down the generations. Prisons are filled with people who do not know God; people who have grown up without Bible teaching, without God's principles and without eternal hope. Anyone who believes in evolution does not know the heart of God and they have no faith in God, nor do they know the extreme lengths God has gone to, to secure our salvation through Jesus our Saviour. Creation is fact – evolution is fiction. Once children know they were put on earth by God for His divine purposes and there is life after this earth, they will know there is eternal hope. If people believe in evolution, they will not have the promise of eternal life. 'Be careful you do not let anyone rob you through philosophy and vain deceit, through the man-made traditions of men, who follow after the universe and not after Jesus' (Colossians 2:8). 'By faith we understand, the universe was created by the Word of God so what we can see has not been made out of things which are visible to us' (Hebrews 11:3).

A vitally important topic all children should be taught is the truth about how we received our Bible, the Word of God. Do Scripturally illiterate people realise the whole Bible came from Hebrew and Jewish writers who were inspired by God to write down what He instructed them to write? The opinions of the prophets were not written, God's laws, principles, precepts, purposes and oracles were written for us and without it, there would not be any of God's righteous principles being played out amongst humanity. Do Scripturally illiterate people realise most of our laws come from the Bible? We are told; do not steal, do not kill, do not pervert the course of justice, do not lie in court, pay your taxes, pay your fines, repay your loans, do not be cruel to animals, do not molest children, do not be cruel to children, respect your elders, do not be cruel to the elderly, do not rebel against the police or other civil authorities. When people rebel against civil authorities, they are indirectly rebelling against God.

Do Scripturally illiterate people realise marriage was ordained by God as an earthly example of what our eternal relationship with God should be. 'A man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife. The two will become one flesh. This mystery is great but I speak concerning Jesus and the assembly (church)' (Ephesians 5:31 & 32). At God's appointed time, all genuine believers who are disciples in Jesus, those who follow Him closely on earth will one day be joined to Him in an eternal covenant relationship that is so close and intimate, God likens it to a holy marriage. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like a certain King Who made a marriage feast for His Son' (Matthew 22:2). 'Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad. Let us give the glory to God for the marriage of the Lamb (Jesus) has come and His Bride (genuine believers) has made herself ready. She was given permission to array herself in bright, pure, fine linen, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints (genuine believers; disciples). Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. These are true words of God' (Revelation 19:7 to 9).

Do Scripturally illiterate people realise any goodness, kindness or righteousness comes only from God because as sinful humans, we can never be good, kind or righteous. Any righteousness people have are in God's eyes, about as good as filthy rags like a rag used to wash a dead body. 'We have all become as one who is unclean and all our righteousness is as a filthy garment' (Isaiah 64:6). The following verses describe the lives of people who choose to live without God and refuse to acknowledge Him. 'As they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not fitting, being filled with all unrighteousness, iniquity, sexual immorality, wickedness, greed, covetousness, malice, envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil habits, ill will, secret slanderers, backbiters, gossipers, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, heartless, covenant breakers, without natural affection, unforgiving, unmerciful, who knowing God's decree which is, those who practice such things are worthy of death, but they not only do the same but approve of those who practice them' (Romans 1:28 to 32). 'Know (understand, realise) this, in the last days (which is now), grievous times will come. Mankind will be lovers of self and utterly self-centred, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, boastful, abusive, blasphemers, scoffers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, ungrateful, unholy, without natural affection, callous, relentless, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, haters of good, traitors, headstrong, conceited, lovers of pleasure and amusement rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying His power. Turn away from these people' (2 Timothy 3:1 to 5). The conduct of people like these belies their claim of faith. For us to be righteous, we need to accept Jesus as our Saviour, heavily depend on God the Father, walk with Him every day, search out the Scriptures to see what His will us regarding our conduct and live in a state of constant repentance. It is impossible for humans to be righteous without God.

Do Scripturally illiterate people realise God's purpose of bringing forth the Hebrew nation was so they could tell the world about God? That was the reason God chose them and in return, He gave them His holy land, Israel. 'Moses said to the children of Israel, "The Lord our God will raise up a Prophet (Jesus) for you from among your brothers (a Hebrew descendent of Abraham), like me." Moses was in the assembly in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai and with our forefathers who received living oracles to give to us' (Acts 7:37 & 38). 'What advantage does the Jew have? ... Much in every way! Because first of all, they were entrusted with the oracles of God' (Romans 3:1 & 2). It was the Hebrew and Jewish

writers who gave us the Scriptures as they were inspired by the Lord God Who said to Moses (and other prophets), "Write this for a memorial in a book" (Exodus 17:14). 'Go, write it before them on a (stone) tablet and inscribe it in a book (scroll) so the Scriptures may be for the time to come forever and ever' (Isaiah 30:8). Jewish children are taught the Bible from infancy. 'From childhood, you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith, which is in Jesus. Every Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, reproof, conviction for sin, correction, discipline and for instruction in righteousness' (2 Timothy 3:15 & 16). God ordained for our salvation to come from the Jews (John 4:22). We have much to be thankful for and we need to thank the Jewish people for bringing us God's precepts, His righteousness, His Word and for giving us our Jewish Messiah.

Parents want their children to be well educated, well fed and well clothed but some parents ignore their children's spiritual needs. Education, food and clothes are only for earth but their spiritual life is for eternity and is vitally important for balanced emotional growth. Do Scripturally illiterate people realise every child needs to know God, the Bible, the path to eternal salvation and about the Hebrews who gave us the Bible? The Jewish people introduced Gentiles to God and to our Messiah. Parents and teachers who do not teach their children and students, the whole Bible came from Hebrew and Jewish writers and our Saviour was a Jewish Man, have failed their children and students. There are many people who do not know Jesus was and still is Jewish, born in Israel, begotten by the Holy Spirit to a Jewish mother Mary, and a Jewish stepfather Joseph, in the culture and language of the Jewish people. Those children are Scripturally illiterate, no matter how academically advanced they are. Without God, they are lost, as all people are and only by knowing God, can we have peace and hope. 'You were at one time separate from Jesus, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the promise (of eternal life), having no hope and without God in the world, but now in Jesus you who were once far off, are made near in the blood of Jesus, for He is our peace' (Ephesians 2:12 to 14).

In this age of the internet, many people have ceased to read books and that includes the Bible. Christians know the Bible is the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, without error, written for our instruction, edification and knowledge but many people are not taking the time to read or study it. A recent study has discovered less than half of the regular churchgoers actually read the Bible and some Christians never read the Bible. If people do not take the time to study God's purposes for humanity, they cannot know what He expects and they cannot learn about what is happening to the whole earth at this time in history. Many children (and their parents) do not know Bible truths like Mary, Joseph and the birth of Jesus, Adam and Eve, David and Goliath, Jonah and the whale, the Good Samaritan, or the fact the Lord's prayer was taught by Jesus. This level of Scriptural illiteracy has brought a severe lack of Biblical doctrines. Many people believe in heaven but reject hell as 'religious nonsense'. The fact is, hell is as real as heaven. Many Christians hold unscriptural opinions about heaven, hell, sin, salvation, Who Jesus really is, the purpose for humanity and even the Word of God itself.

In our modern society with compulsory schooling worldwide and advanced technology, there is no excuse for anyone to not know what is written in the Bible. Almost all homes have a Bible but they are often left unread. If people sincerely want to grow in God to become more like Jesus and honour Him with their lives, they really need to read, study and devour the whole Word of God. There are people who want to honour God but will not take the time to see if their lives truly do honour Him. They cannot please God doing whatever they want, they can only please God by doing His will, whatever that calling is. We cannot change to be like Jesus without knowing what God expects us to do and the only way to find that out is from the Words God has given us to learn. The Bible is like a manual for life. If we bought a new machine, we would study the instruction manual to see how to use it properly. If we want to please God, we need to read His holy Instruction Manual for our lives; not just the New Testament, not just the Old Testament, but the whole written Word of God. The apostles were inspired to write the epistles from the Old Testament. That is all they had to work with so the New Testament is mostly written from the Old Testament. We are blessed to have both Testaments so let us all use that blessing to bless God.

People are more likely to remain closely connected to God if they have followed Jesus and stuck with Him no matter what situations have come their way; if they regularly confess their sin to God and ask His forgiveness; if they are willing to obey God no matter what the cost to their lives; if they pray consistently for the unsaved; if they consciously use God's wisdom and reject foolishness; if they exercise self-discipline, act justly, show mercy to all, attend or hold regular Bible study groups, consciously praise and worship God and keep God uppermost in their minds at all times. 'God has shown you, O mankind, what is good. What does God require of you, but to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God?' (Micah 6:8). 'Pure undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the sin in the world' (James 1:27). Attending a good Bible study group makes Scriptural illiteracy grow into Biblical competence. God has always encouraged people to meet together in home groups. Small home groups create spiritual growth, discipleship, close friendships, they give lonely

people a Godly place to meet and interact with others, yet many churches refuse to have home fellowship groups during the day because they claim 'everybody' goes to work. That is not true. There are many people who may not be at work, retired people, new mothers, shift workers, parents and children on school holidays, all who may enjoy a daytime home group and have their lives transformed. 'Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers for in doing so, some have entertained angels without knowing it' (Hebrews 13:2).

Bible study groups create close friendships. Many people leave church because they cannot find anyone to 'connect' with. Shy or reserved people usually open up in a small home setting. Ways to serve God can be discussed on a personal level in a home group. Personal difficulties can be solved by sharing in a small group. A home group should be a safe place for new Christians to share their thoughts and ask questions about the Bible. People who generally disregard the Bible need to be taught to study, discuss, respect, appreciate, value and be doers of the Word. Large churches are good but smaller groups are better. Scriptural illiteracy is clearly not being challenged in large churches. The church attendees often rely solely on the minister's teaching and do not seek the Word of God for themselves. Ministers are not infallible and often make mistakes. Scriptural illiteracy can be challenged in small groups where new Christians can be heard. Smaller groups help weed out heresies, false doctrines and sin so those things can be kept from deceiving new believers or defiling the church. Some ministers are too afraid to speak about the strong rebukes and words of judgement written in the Bible for fear of offending their congregation. The Bible is the Bible and if God rebukes, reproves, corrects and disciplines His children, we need to accept He is the final Authority. If we refuse to partake in His divine discipline, He considers us to be illegitimate children. 'My child, do not take lightly the chastening of the Lord nor faint when you are reproved by Him, for whom the Lord loves, He chastens. He scourges every child whom He receives. It is for discipline you endure. God deals with you as with children and what child is there whom his father does not discipline? We are all partakers and if you are without discipline, then are you illegitimate and not God's children' (Hebrews 12:5 to 8).

All Christians, all Gentiles and all Jewish people should be inspired to read the Bible just because it is the Word of God; not out of a sense of duty or because it is expected of them but to gain the joy of fellowshiping with the Lord our Creator. The scourge of our generation is Scriptural illiteracy and that can only be reversed if genuine believers take the time to teach people about the whole Word of God. It is good when churches have outreaches to bring unsaved adults to a knowledge of salvation, but it is just as important to teach children about Jesus. If you are in a position where you can teach children about the ways of God, the cross of Jesus, His Jewishness and the Jewish men who wrote our Bible, we must all take the opportunities as they arise. The Lord often opens doors for us to teach but many Christians are too afraid to speak out. We must speak up. We are obliged to speak up on behalf of God without allowing fear of persecution or fear people might think we have lost our minds, to stop us. 'I have put my trust in God. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?' (Psalm 56:11). 'I am an ambassador in chains (persecuted) and in it I may speak boldly as I ought to speak' (Ephesians 6:20). 'I am not crazy but boldly declare words of truth and reasonableness' (Acts 26:25).

Amen and God bless you.

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